GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6581
ANSWERED ON:08.05.2003
FIRE IN NFAI
SURESH KURUP

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high level inquiry set up for this purpose has been given exact cause of the fire;

(b) if so, the details alongwith the rare film prints/documentaries destroyed in the fire; and

(c) the concrete plan to protect the valuable Archives of Prasar Bharati?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a): The high level inquiry has concluded that there is a strong possibility, in the absence of any other evidence to the contrary, that the fire may have been caused due to electrical short circuit in one window AC out of the four ACs installed in the nitrate vault.

(b): 607films (5095 reels) stored in nitrate base were destroyed in the fire on 08.01.2003. Most of the films destroyed in the fire were copied on to the safety base and are safely preserved in National Film Archives of India (NFAI) andonly 544 reels, not transferred to the safety base, were lost. These comprised mostly single reels and incomplete films.

(c): Prasar Bharati has informed that the archival material is not being neglected. A separate unit under a senior officer is looking after the archival tapes, which are kept in air-conditioned rooms. In addition, AIR has, inter-alia, taken the following steps for preservation of its archives:

(i) A Rs. 3 Crore project has been undertaken since November, 2001 to digitalize the old recordings available on magnetic tapes.

(ii) The contents of the magnetic tapes in the archives are being transferred in electronic formats, which are resistant to wear and tear;

(iii) Special archival cupboards are being provided for storage of digitalized archival material, and a highly sophisticated refurbishing mechanism has been installed in Akashwani Bhawan with assistance of UNDP.

About 13000 hours of archival recordings have already been digitalized.